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C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000872

SIPDIS

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F FOR U/S RANDALL TOBIAS  
AF FOR A/S FRAZER, DAS THOMAS-GREENFIELD, AND AF/W  
DRL FOR A/S BARRY LOWENKRON AND DAS JEFFREY KRILLA  
USAID FOR DAA BONNICELLI  
NEA FOR MEPI  
BAGHDAD FOR USAID DIRECTOR LIBERI  
FROM AMBASSADOR JOSEPH LEBARON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2016  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#)  
SUBJECT: HELPING MAURITANIA TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY -- FREE  
AND FAIR ELECTIONS FIRST, THEN GOOD GOVERNANCE

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 784

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 791  
[1](#)C. NOUAKCHOTT 815

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph LeBaron, 1.4(b)(d)

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(C) Key Points  
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-- A historic transition to democracy is underway in Mauritania, but the Mauritaniens need our help to pull it off. The good news is that they know that.

-- Unlike many other Arab and Islamic countries, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is quite receptive to the involvement of the international community in its political process, including that of the United States.

-- This rare receptivity gives the USG a significant opportunity to advance one of the President's and the Secretary's most important foreign policy objectives:

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transformational diplomacy that spreads democracy in the broader Middle East.

-- Taking advantage of this historic opportunity in Mauritania requires a two-tiered funding approach: (1) a pre-election aid strategy in the first half of FY07 focused on helping the Mauritaniens organize free and fair elections, and (2) a post-election aid strategy in the second half of FY07 and in FY08 focused on making sure the newly-elected government establishes the right policies and programs in the areas of transparency, anti-corruption, and human rights.

-- The Mauritaniens already have an excellent idea about what it means, and what it takes, to govern well. The UN has been teaching them that for years. We need instead to push and prod the new government to decide to govern well, and then help them with implementing programs and resources.

End Key Points.

¶1. (C) Eleven months after the bloodless military coup here, Mauritania is still on schedule to hold important parliamentary elections in November and a crucial presidential election next March. Those elections must be free and fair, if Mauritania is to have any chance of transitioning to democracy.

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PRE-ELECTION STRATEGY  
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¶2. (C) Accordingly, Embassy believes the USG's assistance efforts in the rest of FY06 and the first half of FY07 should focus on:

-- Making sure the current Transitional Government and the Independent Electoral Commission fix the many lapses in electoral mechanics observed during the recent constitutional referendum on curbing presidential power (reftels).

-- Reinforcing the capacities and involvement of political parties and civil society in the electoral process.

¶3. (C) The Embassy is working very hard, and in concert with others in the international community, to make sure those electoral lapses are fixed. NDI is also here, helping the political parties organize themselves and prepare for elections.

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POST-ELECTION STRATEGY  
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¶4. (C) After the elections, good governance should be our top priority. The new government will need prodding and pushing from us and others to make sure it does the right thing.

¶5. (C) It is not that Mauritians don't know how to govern well. They do; they know what needs to be fixed. Ironically, the actions taken by the illegitimate Transitional Government during that last 11 months convincingly demonstrates that.

¶6. (C) The challenge before us, then, is to make sure the new, legitimate government builds on what the illegitimate Transitional Government has done in the areas of transparency, anti-corruption, and human rights. Much more needs to be done in these areas, of course, but a start has been made. Also, we believe particular attention must be paid to making sure the army and other security forces stay out of politics.

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BALANCING THE TWO STRATEGIES  
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¶7. (C) Because good governance will be the greatest post-election need, we need to start planning for -- and funding -- good governance programs well in advance of the elections.

¶8. (C) The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative can help. It offers a unique approach to conduct conflict resolution and build democracy. It would be best for the three actors -- State, USAID and DOD -- to have a balanced approach. But we expect our first TSCTI OEF-TS elements to arrive within days. It is critical for USAID to have a concordant and equally visible presence here.  
LeBaron